

## THE CRIMSON LANDSCAPE SERVES AS SYMBOL OF REPUTATION FOR HARVARD UNIVERSITY



**Harvard Yard**, is wired off each spring in preparation for commencement.

When it comes to maintaining its appearance, Harvard, the wealthiest private university in the country is hardly tight fisted. Superintendent of Grounds Benard Keohan survived 1981 on a budget of \$1,851,023, which breaks down to a rough figure of \$5550 per acre.

But his job is not as simple as it sounds. The population of a city of 100,000, in addition to a university community of 29,000, traversing back and forth over college grounds make keeping Harvard's appearance up to its reputation a hefty task. Far from the secluded

ivy covered haven the name brings to mind, Harvard University is actually situated in the center of a

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Commencement is our main concern when we double our workforce with temporary workers in the spring.

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busy urban area. The 333 acres of the University are interspersed throughout the City of Cambridge, MA in such a way that the bounda-

ries are lost and the college properties are used by all.

To withstand the constant wear and tear and keep the grounds up to standard, the campus is divided into seven sections according to the intensity of use, each manned by a crew chief, driver and three maintenance workers. The buildings in each section contribute to the maintenance budget of the area in proportion to the number of square feet of space each occupies. The total budget for the sections takes care of the basic maintenance costs

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of turf and tree care, weed control and equipment replacement.

"Commencement is still our main concern when we begin our work in the spring, although this has been over emphasized in the past, causing some shortsightedness," said Keohan. This means as many as 20 temporary workers and 20 student workers are added to the permanent staff of 36 workers during the pre and post commencement periods.

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Central areas are completely reseeded or resodded each year.

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When Keohan became superintendent of grounds four years ago, his priority was to establish turf areas that would last the entire growing season. Part of that program has included a schedule of overseeding of worn areas, fertilization and weed control. Central areas such as the Harvard Yard, must be completely reseeded or sodded each year. Keohan prefers to use gypsum on lawns rather than aerify. It is a product he feels is highly underrated. "Although it takes two to three years to see results, it has helped to create a more firmly established turf and better drainage," said Keohan.

As important as the reseeding program is the protection of the newly seeded lawns from the intense traffic. Working through the faculty members that act as the masters for each house. Keohan succeeded in restricting active play to designated areas to preserve the turf of the more visible areas. The Yard, and other public areas, have been cordoned off by stakes strung with a single wire. Though not attractive, the wires do allow students to sit or study on the grass but discourage games of frisbee and touch football. "We want to produce attractive grounds for commencement, but not at the cost of the students," said Keohan.

The 18 athletic fields vary in purpose from the Soldier's Field

Football Stadium to the intramural athletic fields but all are under a program to maintain a durable turf. Because the usage of the fields is so difficult to control, a well established durable turf is particularly important. Care of fields used for collegiate sports takes place sometime after May 15 when the spring sports season is over. Renovations can be done for the summer for the fall sports, but the spring activities must be played on fields that have already had one season of use. Intramural sports have more flexibility in their schedules allowing time to do renovation work during the spring. Games can also be cancelled or rescheduled during heavy rain to avoid the total destruction of a field.

The program for the athletic fields requires basically the same maintenance system as the non-athletic turf but includes aeration twice annually rather than gypsum. As the former head of the Stadium crew, Keohan converted the field from the annual resodding to the seeding program now used.

Up to \$120,000 of the maintenance budget is spent contracting out the large lawn care jobs. Weed control contracts make up approximately \$5,000. Weed control and most chemical application is done by contract although Harvard does have four certified pesticide applicators on staff. Sod replacement jobs come to \$15,000 to \$18,000 each year.

Harvard is attempting to preserve many of the old trees on campus and tree care contracts are approaching \$85,000 annually. A computer at Penn State is used to record each of the 2,229 trees on campus. The program was begun to monitor the progress of an injection treatment to fight Dutch Elm disease. The University, with the help of Alex Shigo of the USDA, Northeastern Forestry Experiment Station now records all pruning and pest control for each tree on the computer.

By contracting out major turf work, weed control projects, asphalt maintenance and tree work, the University saves manpower, and the expense of purchasing

complex equipment. The in-house crews are then left with the time to remove the massive amounts of trash and litter that accumulate, maintain the lawns, beds and plant materials.

Day to day maintenance of the equipment is the responsibility of the crew chiefs and the operators, but most large scale repairs are sent out to the distributor. According to Keohan, "the university garage is usually tied up with work on vehicles, we have found that we get faster and more efficient repairs on turf equipment if we send it out."

Equipment replacement schedules are figured into the budget. The cost of replacement of items such as rotary mowers (with an estimated lifespan of two to three years) is included in the maintenance budget. New pieces such as a Jacobsen hydraulic mower for the stadium and two new 72" Toro units are presented separately as capital expenditures and must be approved by both the faculty and the Harvard Corporation.

Labor is billed to each of the seven sections at an inflated rate. Billed to the faculty at \$15 an hour, the men are paid \$8. The remainder goes to pay the overhead costs of the Buildings and Grounds facilities and the office staff and equipment.

Most grounds superintendents don't have this degree of financial

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Harvard spends up to \$120,000 per year for outside contractors for landscaping.

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freedom. Yet, the maintenance needs are unlikely to decrease at a school that continues to receive 12 enrollment applications for each opening, even in times of scarce tuition funding. As the University expands its academic functions and facilities, the maintenance work load will continue to grow. But with a minimum yearly budget increase of 10%, it's doubtful that the grounds department will suffer.

**WTT**